

RECENT LITERATURE

Birds of Hawaii.¹—This handbook fills a need which has become pronounced with the influx of military personnel into Hawaii. The native and introduced birds of the entire archipelago from Midway and Laysan eastward are included. Almost every species is depicted in the colored plates by Y. Oda, which are somewhat crowded with figures but not unattractive. The reproduction of color, however, often leaves much to be desired. There are also eighteen photographs of water birds. The taxonomy, which follows a check-list by E. H. Bryan, Jr., that appeared in the mimeographed 'Elepaio' of the Hawaiian Audubon Society, is modern and a great improvement over older arrangements. The number of genera recognized in the Drepaniidae still seems excessive.

Even though many species of Hawaiian birds are extinct or vanishing, Munro's brief life-history sketches are usually based upon personal experience, for he collected with Palmer and Perkins throughout the islands during the closing decades of the last century. His field work has continued to the present time, with emphasis upon banding and conservation. No one could better summarize the prevailing status of the rarer species. Suggestions for further work are offered at various places in the text. A chapter devoted to this subject, emphasizing the need for field and museum studies of the Drepaniidae would have been worth while. It is also regrettable that the brief list of books consulted was not expanded into a bibliography covering the period since the publication of the older treatises on Hawaiian ornithology. Munro's book will be indispensable to anyone interested in the remarkable avifauna of Hawaii.—D. AMADON.

The song of the Wood Pewee.²—Readers of 'The Auk' for some years past may remember an article by Dr. Craig (Auk, 43: 150-152, 1926) describing the twilight song of the Wood Pewee, and asking others to make records of this song and send them to him for more complete study. The present publication is the result. Twenty-two observers in seventeen states made records and sent them in. One hundred and forty-four records were made of the morning twilight song and seventeen of the evening song. These records were from sixty-eight individual birds, in localities that ranged from Maine and Minnesota, in the north, to North Carolina and Oklahoma in the south.

This is, I believe, the most complete study of the song of a single species that has yet been made, and the first one in which the gathering of data was a co-operative effort. Dr. Craig has done an immense amount of work in the study and analysis of the records, and discusses the results from almost every conceivable angle. Probably no species could be a better choice for such a study than the Wood Pewee, for the bird is common, widely distributed, with a simple, yet pleasing song, and, in the twilight song, a special attractiveness and an element of mystery that turns the task of making observations to a distinct pleasure.

The pewee sings two types of song: the daytime or leisurely singing, and the twilight or rhythmic song. The first consists of two well-known phrases, *peeawee*, or phrase 1, and *peeoh*, phrase 2. In the twilight song these two phrases are alternated in various ways with *ah-di-dee*, or phrase 3. These phrases are much alike

¹ Munro, George C. 'Birds of Hawaii.' 8vo, 189 pp., 20 col. pl., 19 photogr., 1944. Tongg Pub. Co., Honolulu. Price, \$3.00.

² Craig, Wallace, Ph.D. 'The Song of the Wood Pewee *Myiochanes virens* Linnaeus: A study of Bird Music.' New York State Museum Bulletin, No. 334, June, 1943. 186 pp., figs. 1-20, tables 1-15.

in individual pewees throughout the range of the bird, but individuals differ in the arrangement of these phrases in the twilight song.

The author divides each song into sentences, each sentence ending with phrase 2, which has a sound of finality. Birds often repeat a sentence over and over, and such series of the same sentence are referred to as strings. The commonest and most pleasing sentence, often occurring in long strings, is 3132. Years ago, Henry Oldys (*Auk*, 21: 270-274, 1904), describing the twilight song of the Wood Pewee, showed the likeness of the arrangement of this sentence and certain well-known tunes in human music, such as 'Home, Sweet Home' and 'Swanee River.' Dr. Craig now shows us, through a large number of records, that this most musical of sentences is the pewee's commonest one. It is probable, also, that this arrangement of phrases is commoner in human music than we realize. All of the Stephen Foster melodies that I know are built on that plan, and many other such songs. I tried looking through a hymn book and found six of the first thirty hymns of this arrangement.

Fifteen records of the singing of individual pewees are published—two showing the beginning of the twilight song, nine complete records of the morning song, three records of the evening song, and one record of daytime singing. In some cases there are two records of the same individual, showing how its song varied early and late in the season, or in a second year. There are also graphs of certain timed records, and tables showing the date of singing and the time of beginning and ending of the song. From these the author has worked out the time of singing in relation to nautical and civil twilight, and shows that the bird begins to sing between nautical and civil twilight, and ceases between civil twilight and sunrise. It begins earlier in June, in relation to these twilights, than it does later in the season.

There are interesting discussions of the evolution of the song and its phrases and of the psychological aspects of the song; the interpretations in such matters is theoretical rather than conclusive. The author concludes that the pewee's song is true music; that while the leisurely song of daytime serves the territorial purposes, the rhythmic song has no such function. It is independent of the brood cycle and satisfies a psychological need. The bird has musical taste and enjoys its own singing. This idea is elaborated in the latter part of the bulletin with a general discussion of bird songs as esthetic art.

A number of students of bird song have come to similar conclusions. While I agree with the author in this matter and with the statement that the pewee's twilight song is independent of the brood cycle, it is, I believe, true that no one has yet determined, in an individual case, the condition of the brood cycle when the bird begins and ends its season of rhythmic singing. Nor has the position of the nest been determined in relation to the perch from which the rhythmic song is sung. Until this is done, those who may doubt esthetic musical taste in a wild bird will have grounds for believing otherwise.

This bulletin is an important and unique contribution not only to the study of bird songs, but also bird behavior and psychology, and all students of these subjects will profit by its perusal. Those who are simply lovers of nature and of bird songs, though they care not about the why and wherefore of things, if they have yet to know the twilight song of the Wood Pewee, will profit by rising some morning before daylight and going out to hear the song. In the frontispiece of this bulletin, Edmund J. Sawyer has pictured for us everything but the song itself—

the dark woodlands, the growing light in the east reflected in the brook, and the little bird on his perch, pouring out his simple rhythmic melody.—ARETAS A. SAUNDERS.

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NOTES AND NEWS

THE SIXTY-SECOND STATED MEETING OF THE A.O.U.

The annual meeting of the American Ornithologists' Union is again of necessity restricted to a simple business meeting of Council, Fellows, and Members. It will be held, as in 1943, at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, on Wednesday, October 25. Since fifteen Fellows and Members, including ten Fellows and five members of the Council, must be in attendance to transact the necessary business of the Society, it is urged that those members of each group who can do so will endeavor to be present.

William Lutley Sclater, Honorary Fellow of the A.O.U., died on July 7, 1944, from the explosion of a robot bomb.

Jesse D. Figgins, at one time Director of the Colorado Museum of Natural History, and more recently associated with the University of Kentucky, died on June 10, 1944, at the age of seventy-seven. Although an occasional contributor to 'The Auk,' Mr. Figgins appears never to have been affiliated with the A.O.U. He had just completed a monograph on the birds of Kentucky which will be published posthumously.

The Editor acknowledges with gratitude the kind assistance of Dr. and Mrs. A. J. C. Vaurie of New York City who aided in the preparation of the section of Periodical Literature in this number of 'The Auk.'

As THE AUK goes to press, word has been received of the death, on September 18, of J. Fletcher Street, Treasurer and Business Manager of the American Ornithologists' Union.